

## Class 9 English II

### **Extract I**

Six humans trapped.....one was black.

1. Which figure of speech is used in the line 'In bleak and bitter cold'? What special significance do the adjectives bleak and bitter have?

Alliteration, close repetition of consonant sound.

The adjectives bleak and bitter define the word cold. The coldness outside is comparable to the coldness within the hearts of these six characters as they are not warm or friendly with each other.

2. Who are the people referred to in the above extract? Why do they need logs?

The people referred to are six indifferent people, who are trapped together by chance in biting cold. They need logs so that they can renew the dying fire to prevent themselves from cold.

3. State how the following theme is connected with the theme of the poem:

Their dying fire in need of logs

Literally, it refers to the fire that is dying and needs to be kept alive with the use of a log. Metaphorically, it can be understood as the fire of compassion in their hearts that is dying. To keep it burning what they need is a log of wood, but they do not use it. Thus, by the end, each one of them dies from 'the cold within'.

4. What does the first one hold back and why?

The first person holds back her log because she was guided by her racist attitude towards the black man. So she does not use log to prevent the black man from getting its warmth.

5. What character traits would you associate with 'the first one' and 'the next man'? Why?

The first one can be said to be holding a racist attitude as she does not want to benefit the black man. The next man can be said to be a bigot who on seeing that one of the men in the group does not belong to his religion, prevents himself from using his log to renew the fire.

### **Extract II**

The third one sat.....chance to spite the white.

1. What is meant by 'tattered clothes'? What does this expression symbolise? Why does the 'third one' give his coat a hitch?

Tattered clothes refer to the torn clothes. This expression symbolises that the man, who was wearing them was poor and had little money to cover himself in extreme cold.

The poor man does not intend to use his log to renew the fire and thus to protect himself from biting cold, he pulled up his coat to feel a little warm.

2. The 'third one' doesn't want to use his log to warm the rich. Why?

The 'third one' is a poor man and is envious of the rich man. He is prejudiced and thus does not put his log to use.

3. What thoughts preoccupy the rich man's mind? What does it say about him?

The thoughts of keeping his wealth safe from the lazy poor man preoccupied the rich man's mind. It reflects his class bias.

4. What prejudice the black man has and for whom?

The black man is filled with revenge for the white man. Based on colour of the skin, he considers the white man different from himself.

5. Explain the following lines:

For all he saw in his stick of wood

Was a chance to spite the white

The lines refer to the black man, who was filled with revenge for the white man. Therefore, to harm the white man he does not put his log to use. Making the white man suffer in cold was his only chance to get his revenge.

**Extract III**

The last man of this forlorn.....from the cold within.

1. Explain the phrase 'forlorn group.' Which figure of speech is used here?

The phrase 'forlorn group' is an example of oxymoron i.e., a pair of contradictory terms. This phrase is ironical as it refers to these six people, who were sitting together in a group and were sad and lonely.

2. What game is the poet referring to while mentioning the last man of the group?

The selfish game of give and take that the last man employs-since anyone else does not offer his log to renew the fire, he also steps back.

3. What 'proof of human sin' is being referred to here? Explain.

All the six people died with their logs tightly clutched in their hands. Their indifference, animosity, discrimination invited death. This 'proof of human sin' is referred here.

4. The poet says that the characters 'died from the cold within.' What does he mean?

The title of the poem The Cold Within is symbolic of lack of warmth and compassion in human beings. Six human beings are caught against their will in 'bleak and bitter cold,' but none of them uses the wooden stick each one has, due to racism, envy, arrogance, revenge and greed. They are so cold from inside that they do not realise that by not helping

others, they themselves will perish. Their cold heartedness invites death in the end and they die with their logs held tight in their hands.

5. What message is the poet trying to convey in the poem? How does he succeed in carrying out his task?

The message that the poet tries to give is that discriminatory attitude and hatred that humans have against one another on the basis of race, class and religion is futile. It is self-destructive.

The poem projects discrimination based on race, class and religion by narrating the story of six individuals who are caught together by chance in extreme cold. The people in the poem are from different backgrounds and religions. Owing to their prejudices against one another, it becomes difficult for them to put their stick into the fire. The discrimination, racism and bigotry proves futile as none of the six people stay alive at the end. Each perishes, not because of the cold outside but of the cold heartedness within each.